

## POLITICS AND MILITARY RULE IN CROMWELLIAN BRITAIN

*The Cromwellian Protectorate.* By Barry Coward. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002. Pp. viii + 248. ISBN 0 7190 4317 4. £14.99.

*Cromwell's Major-Generals: godly government during the English Revolution.* By Christopher Durston. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001. Pp. x + 260. ISBN 0 7190 6065 6. £15.99.

*John Lambert, parliamentary soldier and Cromwellian Major-General, 1619-1684.* By David Farr. Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2003. Pp. x + 268. ISBN 1 84383 004 3. £50.00.

*Oliver Cromwell, soldier: the military life of a revolutionary at war.* By Alan Marshall. London: Brassey's, 2004. Pp. 320. ISBN 1 85753 343 7. £20.00.

Arguably the closest that Britain has ever experienced to military rule was at certain times during the period from 1647 to 1660. English forces conquered Ireland and Scotland in 1649-50 and 1650-1 respectively, and the two kingdoms were then forcibly 'settled' and incorporated into an English commonwealth. In England, meanwhile, the army repeatedly intervened to purge or disperse Parliaments: in 1647, 1648, 1653, 1654 and 1659 (twice). For about fifteen months, in 1655-7, England and Wales were governed by Major-Generals who exercised sweeping powers to enforce order, preserve security and enforce a 'reformation of manners'. All these developments raise profound questions about the nature of Cromwellian government in general, and the relationship between politics and military rule in particular. Austin Woolrych argued, some years ago, that the Cromwellian Protectorate was not a military dictatorship in any meaningful sense. He suggested that the regime possessed neither the will, nor the means, to impose military rule, that it generally respected the rule of law, and that the military presence in local government even during the time of the Major-Generals was limited.<sup>1</sup> Yet the nature of the interaction between the military and the political – in shaping government, in influencing

policies, and in forming the careers of Oliver Cromwell and other leading figures – remains complex and merits much fuller exploration. The four books under review address these and related themes from a range of different viewpoints. Each throws new light on these problems, two by considering the nature of government during the Protectorate, and the other two through biographical studies of Cromwell and of John Lambert, another brilliant military leader who became one of the key political players of the 1650s. Collectively, these books offer valuable and complementary perspectives on complicated issues that have been less deeply studied than they deserve to be, especially for the period of the Protectorate itself.

## I

Barry Coward's *The Cromwellian Protectorate* provides a welcome synthesis of recent work on the years 1653-9 that is also an important reinterpretation in its own right. The book is divided into two halves. The first comprises five broadly chronological chapters running from December 1653 to May 1659 and is organized around the theme of 'the Protectorate and the quest for reformation'. The second half is analytical in structure, and assesses the impact of the Protectorate on, in turn, the wider world, Scotland and Ireland, and England and Wales. Throughout, Coward's main aim 'is to show that the depiction of the regime as a "retreat from revolution" is very misleading indeed' (p. 2). In this, he succeeds convincingly. His account accentuates the dynamism, ambition and vision of the regime, and he underlines its lasting achievements more emphatically than has been fashionable of late.

He regards those achievements as essentially fivefold. First, the regime had a profound impact on Ireland and was responsible for the transfer of social and political dominance from the Irish Catholic elite to the Protestant landed classes. The consequent 'Protestant Ascendancy', that lasted until the early twentieth century, was the direct result of Cromwellian policies. Secondly, the Protectorate strengthened the long-term development of the British 'fiscal-military state', not least through high levels of direct taxation, and this in turn helped to transform Britain into a major world power from the opening decades of the eighteenth century onwards. Thirdly and fourthly, Coward lists the growing popular awareness of, and participation in, debates on fundamental and divisive political and religious issues. The last and 'most important legacy of the Cromwellian Protectorate' was that 'a broad national Church

was never again established' and that it had 'made a major contribution towards making the division between Church and Chapel a feature of British life that has lasted until our own day' (p. 194). Coward sees these as the five principal reasons for the 'persistent grin' that – Cheshire Cat-like – the Cromwellian Protectorate left behind.

Why, then, despite these very real achievements, did the Protectorate last for only five-and-a-half years? Throughout Coward's account, the underlying antagonism between the army leaders and many of the civilian politicians represented in Parliament forms a running theme and was apparent from the very inception of the Protectorate. Coward argues that the Instrument of Government which established the regime 'demonstrates a marked bias against "over-mighty" Parliaments, of the kind which its drafters [a small group of army officers led by Lambert] clearly thought had ruled between 1649 and 1653' (p. 26). Small wonder, then, that the first Protectorate Parliament launched 'sustained attacks on the army', prompting Coward to conclude that 'more important, even than [this] Parliament's failure to carry out reforms and maintain liberty for tender consciences, was its hostile attitude to the army' (pp. 46-7). Even during the rather more successful second Protectorate Parliament there were 'continuing signs of opposition within the Protectorate's main power base, the army' (p. 96), and Coward argues persuasively that the years from 1656-7 onwards saw the gradual 'emergence of an alliance between Commonwealthmen and army malcontents that was to prove fatally disastrous as far as the Cromwellian Protectorate was concerned' (p. 97). That alliance, he suggests, was directly responsible for the eventual collapse of both the second and third Protectorate Parliaments. Cromwell came to believe that a sudden dissolution of the second Parliament in February 1658 was 'the only means of overcoming the problem of an army-Commonwealthsmen alliance and thereby preserving army unity behind the regime' (p. 98). Similarly, Coward argues that this alliance, together with the growing hostility of senior army officers towards Richard Cromwell and the third Protectorate Parliament from the end of March 1659, caused the collapse of the Parliament in April and the demise of the Protectorate the following month. It is most welcome that Coward's book covers the Ricardian Protectorate as well, and his account is refreshingly original in that he presents its fall as quite sudden and 'not inevitable' (p. 101).

Although Richard's achievements as Lord Protector should not be underestimated, his father stood alone in his ability to straddle the highly contrasted worlds of the army leaders and the civilian politicians: uniquely, he inhabited both camps and could understand both outlooks. Yet his deepest commitment was always to the radical religious agenda that he shared with many of his fellow officers, and specifically to the promotion of liberty of conscience. In line with his own earlier biography,<sup>2</sup> and in common with the prevailing trend in recent scholarship, Coward regards Cromwell's religious beliefs as not only basically sincere but also crucial for our understanding of his career and policies: 'The consistency and fervour with which Cromwell expressed his views make it difficult to sustain the idea that Cromwell's religious zeal was insincere ... On most occasions when Cromwell acted ruthlessly he did so primarily to advance his hopes of bringing about a godly reformation in Britain' (p. 15). Far from blunting his resolve, the setbacks that Cromwell experienced during the Protectorate seem only to have strengthened his determination to turn Britain into a godly commonwealth. Indeed, 'Cromwell came to place more and more importance on achieving this "reformation of manners" as each year passed, as he came to identify this as the main thing required of him and the nation by God.' (p. 17). Coward even presents the dying Cromwell as more resilient and less disillusioned and defeated than some recent accounts suggest, and he argues that at the time of Cromwell's death, 'the regime's visionary aspirations were still very much alive' (p. 101).

The book's value as a teaching resource is greatly enhanced by the admirable selection of documents printed at the back. Very wisely, Coward has almost entirely avoided documents that are already easily accessible in collections such as J.P. Kenyon's *The Stuart constitution*;<sup>3</sup> instead, he reproduces extracts from thirty-two less familiar documents that offer a wide variety of perspectives on the Protectorate. They represent many different types of sources, including speeches in Parliament, Protectoral proclamations, contemporary newspapers and pamphlets, local petitions, private letters and diaries, and the reports of foreign ambassadors. The contemporary viewpoints range from the most deeply hostile (such as Slingsby Bethel or John Evelyn), through the sceptical (Andrew Marvell or Richard Baxter), to the most sympathetic (Marchamont Nedham). The bibliographical essay is also helpful: it is well organized, and full enough to facilitate detailed study by including articles and

unpublished theses, as well as monographs, while remaining clear and efficient in its guidance.

There are a handful of minor errors or judgements with which I would quibble. Cromwell's personal motto, incorporated into the great seal of the Protectorate, should read 'pax *quaeritur* [not *overitur*] bello' (i.e. 'peace is sought by war') (p. 122). The statement that 'the powers of the restored monarchy were not exactly the same as those possessed by monarchs before 1641' (p. 191) obscures the fact that Charles II was consciously restored on the basis of the constitutional reforms that had received royal assent up to the summer of 1641. Coward's favourable verdict on Cromwell's foreign policy, that 'only the benefit of hindsight gives any credence to the charge that the Protectorate's foreign policies destroyed a European balance of power to the subsequent advantage of France' (p. 133), may not take full account of the fact that Slingsby Bethel vigorously argued this point in *The world's mistake in Oliver Cromwell* as early as 1668.<sup>4</sup> But overall this is a fine and important book that deserves henceforth to be the starting-point for advanced study of the Protectorate.

## II

In assessing Cromwell's attempts to promote a 'reformation of manners', Coward argues perceptively that 'any progress towards the hoped-for cultural revolution was very patchy and limited ... There were simply not enough godly ministers and magistrates committed to the campaign of moral reformation to make it anything other than a patchy success' (p. 172). This problem also forms a central theme of Christopher Durston's splendid study of the Major-Generals. Beautifully written and deeply researched in both national and local archives, this monograph comes as close to being a definitive treatment of its subject as might be envisaged.

In general, the Major-Generals have not received a good press either from contemporaries or from historians. At best, they have been portrayed as a short-lived and disastrous attempt to promote a 'reformation of manners' that was doomed to failure because of lack of time, resources and popular support. At worst, they have been seen as 'bashaws' or 'satraps' who imposed authoritarian and bigoted rule on England and Wales, and thereby helped to engender a dislike of standing armies that persisted for generations.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly and persuasively, Durston's argument

stresses the godly aspects of the Major-Generals, rather than the military. He suggests that ‘the quintessential feature of the rule of the Major-Generals was not that it was army rule, nor that it was London rule, but rather that it was godly rule, and it was as such that it was decisively rejected by the great majority of the English and Welsh people’ (p. 232). His book’s sub-title – ‘godly government during the English Revolution’ – gives a very fair indication of what he regards as the most important dimension of the Major-Generals and their activities.

This is not, of course, to lose sight of other facets of their work. Durston shows that they did have at least some success tightening up security. During the period of their rule, for example, over 14,000 bonds were imposed upon suspected Royalists. The Major-Generals episode as a whole reveals just how important the armed forces were in safeguarding the Cromwellian regime. Durston argues that they made conspiracy against the Protectorate more difficult and dangerous, and that they thus did much to ensure its survival. More generally, their impact on local government, the composition of benches and so forth, was at best patchy, and Durston shows that ‘in many parts of the country the Major-Generals had no lasting impact of any significance on the magistracy, shrievalty and the other traditional organs of local government’ (p. 92). Furthermore, he makes a convincing case for believing that the Decimation Tax was widely perceived as so unfair on Royalists, and so contrary to the Rump Parliament’s Act of Pardon and Oblivion (February 1652), that it was ‘from the outset doomed to failure’ (p. 120).

It was, however, the religious dimension of the Major-Generals’ agenda that Durston thinks was most directly responsible for their downfall. His fine analysis of their backgrounds, careers and beliefs leads him to conclude that they ‘were a set of godly governors who were convinced that they were doing God’s vital work and that He would therefore not let them fail’. He argues that their religious conviction was both an asset and a handicap: although it gave them energy, persistence and enthusiasm for their challenging task, it also ensured that local communities often regarded them as an unwelcome intrusion and hoped to remove them as soon as possible. Just how much most people in England and Wales resented the Major-Generals became clear in the late summer of 1656 during the elections to the second Protectorate Parliament, which ‘quickly came to be seen as a referendum on the rule of the Major-Generals’ (p. 190). Those elections, dominated by outcries against

‘swordsmen’ and ‘decimators’, produced a Parliament deeply unsympathetic to the Major-Generals, even after the Council had excluded just over a hundred of its members before it assembled. The meeting of the second Protectorate Parliament marked the effective end of the Major-Generals experiment. Of the eighteen Major-Generals and their deputies, all except George Fleetwood were returned to Parliament and in the autumn of 1656 they left their localities and journeyed to Westminster. The Parliament’s hostility towards them soon became evident, and in late January 1657 a majority of members effectively voted to destroy them by refusing to renew the Decimation Tax, thereby removing their financial underpinning.

The rule of the Major-Generals thus presents a microcosm of the story of the Protectorate in general. Their safeguarding of security against possible Royalist threats helped the regime to survive, yet their drive for a ‘reformation of manners’ was so unpopular as to bring about their own downfall. As Durston writes, ‘their campaign for moral reform must ... be regarded as a clear failure ... Despite their undoubted commitment to the campaign, in the face of widespread popular hostility and resentment Cromwell’s Major-Generals simply did not possess the means to force people to behave in the manner they believed they should’ (p. 179). In a sense, Cromwell had only himself to blame for this situation, for any ruler willing to govern ‘for [the people’s] good not what pleases them’<sup>6</sup> must surely be prepared to encounter the kind of deep unpopularity among a displeased people that the Major-Generals provoked.

### III

One of the most prominent Major-Generals, John Lambert, is the subject of a fine new biography by David Farr. This is the first book-length treatment of Lambert to have appeared since W.H. Dawson’s *Cromwell’s understudy* in 1938.<sup>7</sup> Farr’s book, admirably developed out of his Cambridge PhD thesis,<sup>8</sup> shows an impressive command of both primary and secondary sources, and it places Lambert within the context of his times most effectively. Farr’s frequent use of extended quotations from primary sources is especially commendable because it allows the reader to hear Lambert and his contemporaries speaking for themselves. Among Farr’s most original and interesting conclusions is his emphasis on the importance of kinship, which he calls ‘a key determinant in Lambert’s career’ (p. 227). He argues that

despite his prominence in the Interregnum regimes, Lambert gave assistance to those of his kin who were Cavaliers (including the Tempests, the Ingrams, and above all Sir John Belasyse) or Catholics (for example the Morleys). Such favours worked reciprocally, and Farr reconstructs how Lambert was himself the beneficiary of similar kindnesses during his imprisonment after the Restoration. Farr concludes that ‘if there was any constant in Lambert’s life and career it was based around a kinship network that had been shaped by his family’s past’ (p. 228).

Some of the most stimulating sections in Farr’s study concern the nature of the republican regimes and the relationship between Lambert’s military and political careers. Like Austin Woolrych, Farr suggests that ‘even at the height of [Lambert’s] or Cromwell’s power a full-scale military dictatorship was never a real prospect’ (p. 147). Indeed, according to Farr, Lambert was ‘not willing to establish a blatant military regime’ (p. 201). This is certainly not to downplay the significance of Lambert’s military role in shaping his political attitudes and decisions. Farr argues that ‘protection of the military cause remained at the heart of all of Lambert’s public political actions’, but that ‘throughout his career’ he ‘had to adapt to the new circumstances in which he found himself’ in the sense of adjusting what he did in order best to ‘protect what he perceived as essentially the same “cause”’ (p. 228). In particular, Farr sheds much new light on four episodes that offer excellent case studies of how Lambert responded to changing circumstances.

First, Farr’s learned and thoughtful discussion of the formulation and promotion of the *Heads of the Proposals* in 1647 (pp. 58-63) provides plentiful evidence for ‘concluding that contemporary evidence supports the traditional reading of the *Heads* as an essentially army document. The sources suggest that the army, and in particular Ireton, played the crucial role in their formulation’ (p. 62). Farr corroborates, and adds to, Mark Kishlansky’s criticisms of John Adamson’s account of the genesis of the *Heads*,<sup>9</sup> and maintains that the proposals were principally the work of Ireton and other senior officers, and that Lambert was well aware of them. Secondly, Farr traces a direct continuity between the *Heads* and the Instrument of Government (1653), of which Lambert was the main draftsman. He suggests that both documents reveal a ‘relative conservatism’ that should ‘be seen in the context of [Lambert’s] private actions during the 1650s on behalf of his defeated royalist and Catholic kin’ (p. 228). The Instrument, Farr argues, manifested a ‘distrust of



Parliament in the constitution’: ‘a key facet of Lambert’s political thinking was the belief that Parliament had to be subject to some check if it was not to simply take over the prerogative of the monarchy. This idea was central to his view of the Instrument ... Parliament and the single person was to be balanced by a powerful council’ (pp. 128-9). It was no surprise, therefore, that such thinking placed Lambert on a collision course with Parliament and ultimately with the single person himself, culminating in his final breach with Cromwell in 1657.

Thirdly, Farr convincingly argues that Lambert’s desire to limit the powers of Parliament and the single person, and his preference for a ‘military-based Senate’ (p. 229), naturally led him to oppose the Humble Petition and Advice (1657), with its enhancement of Parliament’s constitutional position and its offer of the kingship to Cromwell. The contemporary debate over the kingship reflected a power struggle between military and civilians – personified by Lambert and Broghill respectively – that lay at the heart of the Protectorate. The army’s opposition to kingship, led by Lambert, seems to have been a crucial reason why Cromwell in the end decided to refuse the title, but the fact that he delayed for so long over whether to accept an offer so deeply rooted in Broghill’s civilian politics apparently caused a serious rift between Cromwell and Lambert. That rift prompted Lambert’s refusal to take the oath of loyalty required by the new constitution, and Cromwell’s consequent insistence that he resign his commands, thereby marginalizing the man who up until that time had been widely regarded as his most likely successor.

Fourthly, if Lambert’s commitment to the army underpinned his opposition to the Humble Petition and Advice and the kingship, and led to his falling out with Cromwell, it also stymied his attempts in 1658-60 to secure a settlement after Cromwell’s death. Lambert was the key figure within the army in brokering an alliance with republican politicians such as Sir Henry Vane. But in the process, Lambert’s belief in religious liberty of conscience, which he shared with Vane, caused him to become identified with a growing Quaker threat that was crucial in precipitating the Restoration of Charles II. In the end Lambert ‘was simply not trusted’ (p. 214), by republicans such as Sir Arthur Haselrig as well as by Royalists. The army found that by 1659-60 it ‘had no natural allies’ (p. 214), and ‘increasingly until the Restoration Lambert’s options were limited by having to enforce through the

military the settlement he wanted' (p. 230). Lambert's role within the army was thus ultimately responsible for the collapse of his political career.

Just as Lambert's military position guided his political attitudes, so his politics in turn shaped his religious priorities. Farr argues perceptively that Lambert's religious beliefs were inseparable from his political position. For example, his wish to extend liberty of conscience, plainly evident in the *Heads* and the Instrument, reflected his belief that 'the right approach was to make sure that the requisite constitutional context was in place to support the religious toleration he desired. For Lambert the constitutional issues, especially the jurisdiction of Parliament, crucially underpinned the religious issues' (p. 179). Similarly, 'the essence for Lambert of the Nayler case was that he did not want Parliament to have unlimited judicial power' (p. 182). He advocated leniency towards Nayler because he feared that Parliament's judicial role might lead it to act as 'an arbitrary power' (p. 182).

Over Nayler, as over the kingship, Lambert thus emerged as 'a symbol of army rule' (p. 182). This was appropriate for someone whose political prominence ultimately rested on his military skills and achievements. Farr writes that by 1650 'there were clear signs of a deterioration in Cromwell's ability to lead in the field as age and the rigours of the Irish campaign took their toll' (p. 91). He argues persuasively that by this time Lambert 'was emerging as probably the most effective field commander', and that in the Dunbar and Worcester campaigns he 'thoroughly out-generalled' Cromwell, who was twenty years his senior (p. 91). Thereafter, however, Cromwell had one great political advantage over Lambert: 'Cromwell's character could span the ideological differences in the state much better than Lambert's ever could ... Cromwell's character and experience enabled him to span the army and "country" more than any other figure in the military. He sought "reconciliation" between these two groups' (pp. 150, 152). If this was the key to Cromwell's dominance during the Interregnum, the relationship between Lambert's military activities and his own political career remains difficult to reconstruct precisely. Farr admits that 'without direct first-hand testimony it is clearly difficult to quantify how Lambert's experiences on the battlefield, but also as part of an officer corps with a truly revolutionary core, reshaped his approach to politics and religion' (p. 228). The most that historians can do, perhaps, is to show this process working in action, on specific occasions and through particular policies, and Farr is to be

applauded for achieving this most thoroughly and effectively throughout the course of Lambert's career.

#### IV

A similarly favourable assessment of Lambert's military abilities can be found in Alan Marshall's *Oliver Cromwell, soldier*, where he is described as 'an asset' to Cromwell:

A far different character from the complicated Oliver, he was a daring, handsome, brave and intelligent soldier ... He was a lover of fine art, literature, horticulture and good clothes. With his handsome wife and bold attitude, he was also much beloved by the soldiers. Indeed, later some were to say that Dunbar was as much Lambert's victory as Cromwell's, and it is clear that the latter relied on Lambert for his advice (p. 236).

Marshall has performed a very useful service in writing a military biography of Cromwell. Political biographies abound – three excellent ones have appeared within the last fifteen years alone<sup>10</sup> – but his military career has received less attention from recent historians apart from an excellent article by Austin Woolrych and Peter Gaunt's invaluable *Cromwellian gazetteer*.<sup>11</sup> Marshall's book is thus a distinctive addition to the vast literature on Cromwell. It combines military history with biography very elegantly, and manages to sketch in the rapidly changing military context without losing its primary focus on Cromwell's own activities and contributions. The accounts of battles are clear, accessible and interesting, and there are fourteen very helpful maps as well as some good black-and-white photographs.

Whilst very carefully and thoroughly researched, and judicious in its critical use of sources,<sup>12</sup> this book is probably notable more for its judgements and reassessments than for any major new archival discoveries. Marshall does not, for example, throw much fresh light on events such as Charles I's arrest at Holmby House in 1647, or Pride's Purge the following year, and the extent of Cromwell's prior knowledge of – and involvement in – those episodes ultimately remains as mysterious as ever. More interesting is Marshall's re-evaluation of the nature and trajectory of Cromwell's military career. He points out how brief it was, for it only seriously got underway with Cromwell's appointment as a colonel of cavalry in 1643, and it ended in 1651. Only three times did he command more than 10,000 men: at Preston (1648), Dunbar (1650) and Worcester (1651). Marshall does full justice to 'the generally neglected campaign of Preston', which he argues 'showed Oliver

Cromwell's genuine abilities as an astute and aggressive soldier' (p. 160).

Nevertheless, he feels that Cromwell 'as a commander, peaked at some point around 1644-5. By this stage he had learned all he needed to know of the technical side of soldiering for the purpose of the Civil Wars ... Thereafter, as a soldier he rested on a level developmental plateau' (p. 273). This is a striking and persuasive verdict. Marshall also offers an illuminating reassessment of Cromwell's notorious Irish campaign in the autumn of 1649, based on distinguishing between the two massacres of Drogheda and Wexford:

Drogheda was an appalling atrocity, even by seventeenth-century standards, which in the end seems to have stirred misgivings even in Cromwell himself. We can see this in the plethora of excuses doled out by him afterwards ... His anger and hatred got the better of him. Wexford was a different case. Here Cromwell controlled his temper and would have taken the town on terms, but his men pre-empted him. That said, he was dilatory in preventing the deaths that occurred, seemingly regarding them as part of God's punishment as a Providential opportunity (p. 233).

On Cromwell's qualities as a soldier, Marshall has much of interest to say. In common with most recent scholars, he finds the roots of Cromwell's motivation and energy in his religious beliefs, and writes that 'in his military career, the key to understanding his actions nearly always lies in his relationship with God' (p. 24). 'His campaigns were, in many senses, "holy wars"' (p. 273), and 'he often seems to have seen in [combat] something truly divine' (p. 276). Among his qualities as a leader in battles, 'unquestionably supreme was Cromwell's hard-won and strongly held faith in himself and his God' (p. 269). Furthermore, his faith gave a confidence of victory that was self-fulfilling: 'the idea of Cromwell being part of the Divine Will was reinforced by his successes as a commander in the field; the one fed upon the other, and became self-sustaining' (p. 26). Such a portrait is wholly consistent with the prevailing view of recent historiography.

Cromwell's deep religious faith helped to make him an inspirational commander who led by example, from the front rank. Well aware of the importance of logistics, he realised the need for money and good supplies, and he often had to struggle to secure these, especially in the early years of the first Civil War. But what was really distinctive about him as a commander in the field – Marshall calls it his 'greatest tactical innovation' – was 'the inculcation of sufficient discipline in his men to hold them in check and recover them after the first charge' (p. 283). This enabled Cromwell's men to charge into the enemy, disperse them, and then regroup quickly

enough to reverse and attack them from the rear. Although the origins of Cromwell's talent remain obscure, Marshall thoughtfully notes that even in 1642 'a natural instinct for tactics in the field was already grounded in his love of hunting and horses' (p. 28). In the end, this is probably about as far as we can go in explaining why a fenland farmer with no military experience prior to 1642 should have emerged as such a remarkable commander of cavalry thereafter.

My only real reservation about Marshall's book is that it does not analyse as rigorously as it might the relationship between Cromwell's military career and his emergence into political prominence. We are told that 'military success gave him public stature' (p. 271), but exactly how, when and why did military success translate into political influence? It is left unclear how far Cromwell's role in the Long Parliament after 1642, for example, or his promotion of the *Heads of the Proposals* in the summer and autumn of 1647, were dependent on his military rank and achievements. At times, Marshall's account tends to treat Cromwell's record as a soldier in isolation from other aspects of his career, and a more integrated approach would have been helpful in elucidating just how important his success on the battlefield was as a foundation for national political significance. It would also be interesting to explore the extent to which military success in this period necessarily led to political influence, or whether this varied so much between individuals that it becomes impossible to generalize.

## V

More broadly, the nature of the relationship between the military and the political stands out as one of the most crucial but also intractable problems that confront the continuing attempts of historians to reconstruct Cromwellian England. The army simultaneously sustained the republic, yet prevented Cromwell from achieving 'healing and settling' and realizing his vision of a godly commonwealth. Without the army, the Protectorate could never have survived as long as it did; but by its very existence and its own actions the army also ensured that the regime's potential to secure support for the cause of godly reform was greatly curtailed. The army at once sustained and stunted the Cromwellian Protectorate. The religious zeal that propelled Cromwell and the Major-Generals through their military and political careers also prevented them from generating lasting stability. There is surely much more for

historians to do in exploring these themes, in particular through more detailed studies of Protectorate politics, more research probing the connections between military and political developments, and more biographies of key figures whose careers as soldiers brought them into political prominence. How far can their political attitudes and activities only be understood in terms of their military careers? Did their military backgrounds do more to help or to hinder their contribution to politics and government? How great was the impact of military methods and priorities on the workings of government throughout the Interregnum? To what extent were military rule and the rule of law mutually exclusive, or was it possible for them to co-exist? It is a compliment to, rather than a criticism of, these four valuable books to say that after reading them, many of these questions still remain to be fully answered, and that much further has yet to be done in unravelling them.

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<sup>1</sup> Austin Woolrych, 'The Cromwellian Protectorate: a military dictatorship?', *History*, 75 (1990), pp. 207-35; reprinted in David L. Smith, ed., *Cromwell and the Interregnum* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 63-89.

<sup>2</sup> Barry Coward, *Oliver Cromwell* (Harlow, 1991).

<sup>3</sup> J.P. Kenyon, ed., *The Stuart constitution: documents and commentary* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 1986).

<sup>4</sup> Slingsby Bethel, *The world's mistake in Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1668).

<sup>5</sup> Durston ably surveys the historiography surrounding the Major-Generals in his first chapter.

<sup>6</sup> S.C. Lomas, ed., *The letters and speeches of Oliver Cromwell with elucidations by Thomas Carlyle* (3 vols., London, 1904), III, p. 345 (Cromwell to the 'Council of War' at Reading, 16 July 1647).

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<sup>7</sup> W.H. Dawson, *Cromwell's understudy: the life and times of General John Lambert and the rise and fall of the Protectorate* (London, 1938).

<sup>8</sup> David Farr, 'The military and political career of John Lambert, 1619-57' (PhD thesis, Cambridge, 1996).

<sup>9</sup> See especially pp. 58-9, note 61. For the debate between Mark Kishlansky and John Adamson, see J.S.A. Adamson, 'The English nobility and the projected settlement of 1647', *Historical Journal*, 30 (1987), pp. 567-602; Mark A. Kishlansky, 'Saye what?', *Historical Journal*, 33 (1990), pp. 917-37; J.S.A. Adamson, 'Politics and the nobility in Civil-War England', *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991), pp. 231-55; Mark A. Kishlansky, 'Saye no more', *Journal of British Studies*, 30 (1991), pp. 399-448.

<sup>10</sup> Coward, *Oliver Cromwell*; Peter Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford, 1996); and J.C. Davis, *Oliver Cromwell* (London, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Austin Woolrych, 'Cromwell as a soldier', in John Morrill, ed., *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution* (Harlow, 1990), pp. 93-118; Peter Gaunt, *The Cromwellian gazetteer: an illustrated guide to Britain in the Civil War and Commonwealth* (Stroud, 1987).

<sup>12</sup> Pretty much the only exception is Marshall's unqualified acceptance (p. 248) of John Aubrey's story that at the battle of Dunbar on 3 Sept. 1650, Cromwell 'carried on as with a divine impulse. He did laugh so excessively as if he had been drunk, and his eyes sparkled with spirits.' Aubrey is the only surviving source for this much quoted story, and the problems that this poses for historians are discussed in Morrill, ed., *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 10, and in Gaunt, *Oliver Cromwell*, p. 217.